

Carl Heitzmann (1836–1896) and the American Dermatological Association (ADA)

The 119th Meeting of the world's oldest national dermatological society, the American Dermatological Association of 1876, took place in Vienna, July 6–10, 1999. It was only the second meeting in Europe (and the third outside the USA and Canada) in 123 years: 1932 in Havana, Cuba and 1980 in St. Moritz, Switzerland, were the previous ones. Carl Heitzmann was one of the sixteen founders of the ADA mentioned in Fred Szymanski's centennial monograph (1976). He was a dermatologist and pathologist, a pupil of Hebra's and one of the two physician-painters providing the water colors for the master's monumental atlas. In fact, Heitzmann lithographed not only his own water colors for this atlas but also some painted by his predecessor, Anton Elfinger, another of Hebra's pupils who died in 1864. When Felix von Bärensprung, head of department at the Charité in Berlin, died in the same year, Heitzmann joined with Hebra to complete the illustrations for the latter's atlas edited posthumously. Discouraged by his failure to succeed Carl Rokitsky (1804–1878) in the chair of pathology in Vienna, in 1874, Heitzmann left for New York where he became

a respected member of the medical community and founder member of this venerable society. There he trained scores of dermato(patho)logists in the following 22 years. It is fitting to remember Heitzmann in this city where he trained and worked as doctor and artist for so many years. The fact that he contributed substantially also to other fields of medicine remained largely forgotten. One unknown discovery in the field of hematology is addressed in the following paper by Stella Fatovic-Ferencic from Zagreb who went after all these details to shed light on her countryman's achievements and to provide reference to recent data on Heitzmann collected by another lady from Vienna, Ingrid Hackstock.

George Henry Fox, at the time Honorary President of the ADA, closed his address at the Golden Jubilee in Philadelphia on May 27, 1926 with a quotation from the *Aeneid* (I, 203). Let me repeat it.

Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit

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Szymanski FJ: *Centennial History of the American Dermatological Association, 1876–1976*
Chicago: ADA

The Description of the Hematoblast by the Dermatopathologist Carl Heitzmann in 1872

Textbooks of hematology give credit for the description and naming of the *hematoblast* to Georges Hayem (1841–1933), from France, often addressed as the father of hematology. Indeed he wrote, in 1877, in an article entitled "Sur l'évolution des globules rouges dans le sang des vertèbres ovipares" (Hayem, 1877), that he had found colorless cells in the blood of oviparous vertebrates which he proposed to call hamatoblasts ("je propose des les désigner sous le nom d'hématoblastes"). From his text can be gleaned that he understood the role of these cells in hematopoiesis perfectly well. He quoted several other authors, including his teacher Vulpian, but did not refer to previous use of this term and was quite explicit in proposing it himself.

Less well known and usually neglected is the fact that 5 years



Figure 1. Carl Heitzmann among colleagues (Inst Hist Med Vienna). Standing: Louis Adolphus Duhring (1845–1913) at the far left, Carl Heitzmann at the far right; other persons and place of photograph unknown; Courtesy of the New York Academy of Medicine.

Manuscript received May 28, 1999; accepted for publication August 5, 1999.

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before Hayem's article appeared, hematoblasts were described in depth and also called such, by Carl Heitzmann (1836–1896) (Fig 1), a dermatologist in Vienna, who later became one of the founding members of the American Dermatological Association. Credit to his work should be given herewith.

Carl Heitzmann was born on October 2, 1836, in Vinkovci, Croatia of today, Kingdom of Hungary (Austrian Empire) then. He studied in Budapest and Vienna and graduated M.D. in 1859. He made his postgraduate medical education in the departments of Franz Schuh (surgery), Ferdinand Hebra (dermatology), Salomon Stricker (experimental pathology), and Carl Rokitansky (pathology) (Hackstock, 1998). He became famous as an illustrator (water colors, lithographs) as much as a physician. His artwork is more frequently quoted in medical literature than his medical papers, which mainly dealt with cellular pathology (Holubar, *et al.*, 1993). In a treatise entitled *Studien am Knochen und Knorpel (Ueber Blutbildung im entzündeten Knochen)* (Fig 2), published in 1872 (Heitzmann, 1872), he wrote that he had observed in specimens of bone marrow from an experimentally injured dog's leg, developmental stages of red cell formation, concluding that he proposed to name the precursor corpuscles of red cells, hematoblasts ("will ich, um wiederholte Beschreibungen zu vermeiden, den Namen Hämatoblasten wählen"). After the famous pathologist Carl Rokitansky retired in 1873, Heitzmann became one of the contenders for the chair in pathology but failed in this endeavor. Disappointed, he left for the USA in 1874 and settled in New York City, where he became a respected member of the medical community training a large number of dermatologists over the subsequent two decades. In 1876, he joined fifteen other doctors to form the American Dermatological Association (ADA), which eventually held its first meeting in Niagara Falls on September 4–6, 1877. In the second (1877–1878) and fifth (1880–1881) biennial periods of the ADA, Heitzmann served as vice-president, in the first instance under James Clark White, in the second under James N. Hyde as presidents (Szymanski, 1976). Heitzmann died on a trip to Rome in 1896. The whole story of his description of the hematoblast is presented in detail elsewhere (Fatović-Ferenčić, in preparation). This short article is intended to remind today's members of this old and noble society of an outstanding merit of one of its founder members.

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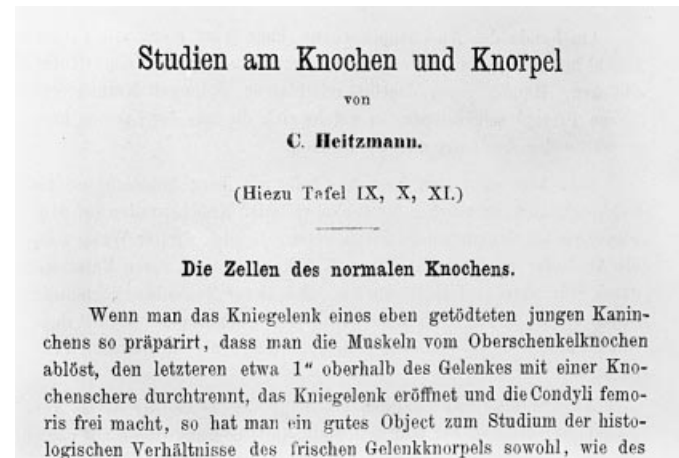


Figure 2. Heitzmann's article of 1872, frontispiece.

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